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# Toward an Affirmative Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Leadership Paradigm

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*This article presents an affirmative paradigm for understanding the leadership of sexual minorities—that is, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. Although research on LGBT issues in leadership to date is almost nonexistent, there are several bodies of literature that can contribute to an understanding of the unique leadership challenges faced by sexual minority people. These include the literatures on stigma and marginalization, leadership in particular status groups (e.g., college students, women), and LGBT vocational issues (especially workplace climate and identity disclosure). We propose a new, multidimensional model of LGBT leadership enactment that incorporates sexual orientation (particularly regarding identity disclosure), gender orientation (including leader gender), and the situation (conceptualized here as group composition); the model also is embedded in context, the most relevant factors that affect the enactment of leadership being stigma and marginalization. We explicate this model with findings and concepts from relevant literatures, and we conclude the article with recommendations for building a scholarly literature in LGBT leadership.*

**Key words:** leadership, sexual orientation, LGBT populations, gender

**A**lthough there has been debate among historians about the presumed sexual preferences of renowned world leaders such as Alexander the Great (Cartledge, 2004), Peter the Great (Fox, 2004), and Abraham Lincoln (Tripp, 2005), scholarly work on leadership has yet to consider the characteristics and perspectives that sexual minorities—that is, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals—may bring to the process of leadership. None of the contributors to the January 2007 special issue of the *American Psychologist* (Sternberg, 2007) on leadership addressed this dimension of diversity at all. However, psychologists are not alone in this oversight. Bearing the same publication date, *The Harvard Business Review* can be criticized similarly for its issue considering “The Tests of a Leader” (Stewart, 2007).

If leadership is construed broadly as an influence process in which an individual moves others in a particular direction (attitudinally, cognitively, or behaviorally), then lay accounts and media stories indicate that there is no dearth of leadership behaviors being enacted by LGBT

individuals. Some of this leadership is informal and perhaps even unintentional. For example, there is considerable public impact when known and presumably respected individuals “come out” (Baker & Greene, 2007), such as lesbian comic Ellen DeGeneres, transgender scientist Ben Barres (Vedantam, 2006), or Army National Guard Lieutenant Dan Choi (May, 2009). Similarly, the socioeconomic revival of cities and neighborhoods catalyzed by lesbian and gay residents can be viewed as a kind of informal community leadership (Portelli, 2003).

Other leadership behaviors may arise from grassroots organizing around common group concerns—for example, the massive mobilization of gay and lesbian communities to fight HIV/AIDS (Shilts, 1987). Individuals involved in such efforts may find themselves in subsequent formal leadership roles as a result of these success experiences (Baker & Greene, 2007); the rise of San Franciscan Harvey Milk to municipal office is a prototypic example of this trajectory. It is interesting that progress in gay rights in the United States is not captured in the efforts of one charismatic leader who galvanizes large constituencies (such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Betty Friedan in civil and women’s rights, respectively). Foci of gay rights struggles continually shift to adapt to new social presses (e.g., HIV/AIDS, workplace rights, same-sex marriage), and these battles tend to be fought legislatively at the state level (where such rights are controlled). Thus, single nationally recognized leaders have not emerged; rather, there are many LGBT individuals who function as leaders for specific issues in localized efforts (Clendinen & Nagourney, 1999).

Although some LGBT leadership is unintentional and emerges out of local activism, many LGBT individuals engage deliberately in formal or professional leadership roles, and sexual minority issues and concerns may or may

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not be directly relevant to the leadership role. That is, one might be dubbed a “professional gay,” in which LGBT identity and issues form the core of one’s leadership role, or one might be viewed as a “gay professional,” in which sexual orientation constitutes only part—and perhaps a very small part—of one’s identity as a leader (Fassinger, 2008a). Moreover, LGBT leaders may choose to lead in organizations composed primarily of other sexual minorities (e.g., the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force), or they may assume leadership in organizations in which the group composition is mixed or even predominantly (and presumably) heterosexual (e.g., the U.S. Army). Finally, for some LGBT leaders, their sexual minority status is openly known or easily inferred, whereas for others, their identity remains hidden or undisclosed for a variety of reasons (e.g., fear, perceived irrelevance, hostile work climates, antigay policies, or the leader’s own identity development process).

Thus, it is clear that sexual minority people do assume leadership roles, the lack of scholarly attention notwithstanding. What is not known is whether and how a leader’s lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identity might influence the enactment of a leadership role, including the response of the group being led. It is reasonable to assume that sexual minority status does affect leadership, as the research literature suggests that identity dimensions—particularly those arising from marginalized status—have relevance for understanding leader and follower behavior. For example, there is a substantial literature addressing gender and leadership (Chin, Lott, Rice, & Sanchez-Hucles, 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2007). Moreover, research suggests that marginalized groups may more quickly and comprehensively prefer and implement transformational approaches to leadership in particular contexts (Chin et al., 2007; Eagly &

Carli, 2003a, 2003b; Yoder, 2001). Thus, it is plausible that sexual orientation, as a status variable producing marginalization, is relevant to the leadership enactment of LGBT individuals and the groups that they lead.

The purpose of this article is to explore the possibilities of an affirmative leadership paradigm for LGBT people. We begin with an argument for a paradigmatic shift in conceptualizations of leadership. We propose a new multidimensional model of LGBT leadership enactment that incorporates sexual orientation (particularly in regard to identity disclosure), gender orientation (including leader gender), and the situation (conceptualized here as group composition); the model also is embedded in context, the most relevant factors that affect the enactment of leadership being stigma and marginalization. We explicate the model, referencing concepts and findings from several bodies of literature that we believe contribute to an understanding of the unique leadership challenges faced by sexual minority people. These include stigma and marginalization, leadership in particular status groups (e.g., college students, women), and LGBT vocational issues (especially workplace climate and identity disclosure). We conclude the article with recommendations for building a much-needed scholarly literature in LGBT leadership.

## **The Need for an LGBT-Affirmative Leadership Paradigm**

Over the past 60 years, models and conceptualizations of leadership in Western societies have changed profoundly, especially compared with ideas existing in prior centuries (White, Hodgson, & Crainer, 1996). The culturally exalted bloodline or “great man” notions of leadership, which had predominated for many hundreds of years, gave way in the 1940s and 1950s to more rigorous scientific study of the democratic ideas of “command and control approaches,” based more on earned formal authority and the personal power and expertise of the leader. In a comprehensive discussion of evolving models of leadership, Hodgson and White (2001) observed that in both of these approaches, the emphasis was on the qualities and behavior of the leader. The leader (presumably male) knew what to do and how to do it, and the follower’s role was to respond as requested. This pattern of leadership could be captured as a simple transactional interplay of lead-and-obey behavior in which followers, motivated by self-interest, were rewarded or praised (or punished) for specific behaviors determined by the leader.

These “transactional” approaches were modified in the 1950s and 1960s when alternative leadership approaches emerged, particularly “situational” leadership, which focused on flexible leader behaviors matched to the purposes of the group and the developmental needs of followers. By the 1970s, increased attention to followers had evolved into concepts of “transformational” leadership (Burns, 1978). Transformational approaches to leadership acknowledged the right of the follower to choose to follow a leader and highlighted leader behaviors that could engender follower motivation, engagement, commitment, and enhanced mo-

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rale. Instead of simple exchanges of rewards (or punishments) between leaders and followers, appeals were made to higher order ideals, such as equality, justice, and empowerment. Concepts of transformational leadership involved a heightened emphasis on inclusion, power sharing, collaboration, two-way communication, inspiration, role modeling, meaning making, setting of high expectations, and fostering collective identity. The leader role became much more interactive with followers—leaders now knew where they wanted to go, but did not know how to (and could not) get there on their own (Hodgson & White, 2001). Thus, transformational approaches focused on empowered followers joining with leaders to find paths to mutually established goals.

In today's globally based, technologically connected world, notions of leadership in Western cultures have moved even further beyond transformational approaches to "learning"-based concepts of leadership (White et al., 1996; Zaccaro, 2007). In these learning approaches, based on the accelerating introduction of ambiguity and chaos into decision making, the leader does not always know where or what to do, and certainly not how to do whatever it is. With rapidly changing technologies, leaders must guide groups into areas of potentially productive uncertainty, the intent being that everyone should learn as they proceed. This approach requires cognitive complexity, flexibility, agility, and rapid reformulation of both problems and solutions to respond to continuously changing contexts. The leader, as a learner and learning facilitator, creates both opportunities and challenges to be explored by others and leverages resources to help others achieve goals.

We posit that it is no coincidence that these evolutions in conceptualizations of leadership have occurred alongside the movement of women, people of color, openly LGBT

individuals, people with disabilities, and others from marginalized groups into formal positions of leadership. Newer notions of leadership are less tied to proscriptive expectations of how a leader is "supposed" to look, act, or bring about change, and these approaches create more room for different types of leaders with varying styles and perspectives. Moreover, the more recent conceptualizations of leadership clearly integrate attention to a broad range of followers, and they, too, are presumed to exhibit diverse needs, styles, and perspectives. With the contemporary emphasis on inclusion, collaboration, and diversity in the workplace (Fassinger, 2008b), a thorough examination of identity status dimensions in leadership is timely, particularly regarding the effects of marginalization on leadership enactment.

Such issues have been raised by feminists in regard to women's experience. Indeed, feminist critiques of the dominant paradigms of psychology in areas as divergent as research, therapy, education, the workplace, and sexual behavior have constituted the driving force behind much of the transformative work in diversity done by psychologists over the past several decades (Fassinger, 2005). Feminist epistemology fundamentally and radically questions the "ways in which dominant conceptions and practices of knowledge attribution, acquisition, and justification systematically disadvantage women and other subordinated groups, and strives to reform these conceptions and practices so that they serve the interests of these groups" (Anderson, 2007, para. 1). Citing Harding's (1993, 1998) classic writings, Anderson (2007) asserted,

There are important things to learn from taking seriously the perspectives of all marginalized groups—not just of various groups of women, but men and women in postcolonial societies, men and women of color, gay men, and so forth. A system of knowledge that draws on their insights and starts from their predicaments will be richer than one that draws only on the insights and starts from the predicaments of privileged groups alone. (Trends in Feminist Epistemology section, para. 2)

Applied to sexual minority people and leadership, a feminist epistemological stance suggests the importance of considering how a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identity might contribute to a shared experience of marginalization that potentially influences leadership.

Laura Brown's presidential address (delivered in 1988) to the (now) Society for the Psychological Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues (Division 44, American Psychological Association) suggested a useful starting point for paradigmatic change that fully recognizes LGBT experience. In that address, Brown (1989) posed a provocative question, one that still holds relevance two decades later: "What does it mean for psychology if the experiences of being lesbian and/or gay male . . . are taken as core and central to definitions of reality rather than as a special topic tangential to basic understandings of human behavior?" (pp. 445–446). Brown articulated three elements of sexual minority experience that exert profound influence on individual lives and thus can contribute to a



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paradigm for psychology that is inclusive of sexual minority perspectives. The first element is marginalization, or outsider status, which might allow sexual minority people to “see differently, hear differently, and thus potentially challenge the conventional wisdom” (p. 451). The second element is a bicultural perspective, allowing both sexual minority and majority understanding, which possibly “facilitates an understanding of the rules by which the mainstream culture operates, while simultaneously being able to envision new forms by which the same tasks might be accomplished” (p. 450). The third element is normative creativity, the freedom to set social and relationship rules, which allows sexual minorities the latitude “to create boundaries that will work where none exist from tools that may be only partially suited to the task” (p. 452).

Although Brown’s (1989) conceptualization predates the more recent inclusion of transgender experience under the umbrella of sexual minority issues, it is not difficult to expand her paradigmatic musings into greater inclusivity. Fassinger and Arseneau (2007), for example, outlined the ways in which LGBT individuals all participate in a common experience of gender transgression—that is, defiance of societal norms regarding “acceptable” behavior based on one’s gender (how one is supposed to self-present in appearance or manner, how one’s genitalia are supposed to look, with whom one is supposed to engage sexually). Sexual minorities also share the stigmatization of their gender-transgressive choices.

Such elements of sexual minority experience would seem to be highly relevant to leadership, an interpersonal process in which perceptions of self and others, social norms and expectations, and the capacity to understand and interact successfully with diverse others all matter deeply. Indeed, Zaccaro (2007) noted that effective leadership may

constitute a relationally oriented special case of overall high performance. Whether and how the common experiences of sexual minorities might be reflected in, say, leadership style preferences and behaviors, follower attitudes and responses, and organizational outcomes of particular leader–follower combinations, are valid and important empirical questions. Answers to such questions might lead directly to leadership enhancement for LGBT individuals, as well as to more distal outcomes such as friendlier workplace climates or improved organizational functioning.

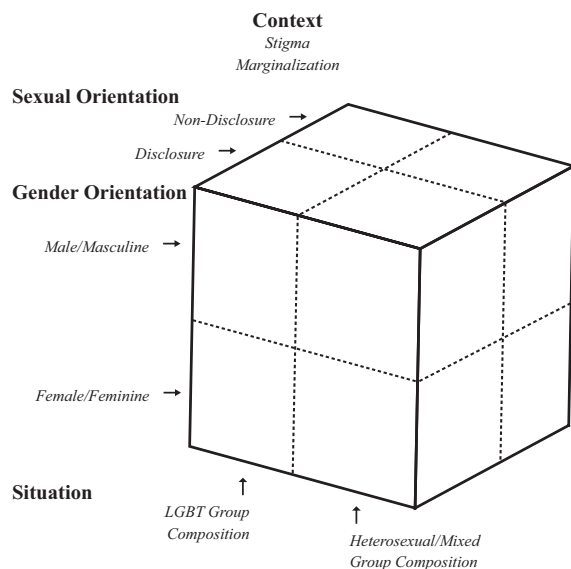
Unfortunately, very few researchers have asked such questions. Unlike the study of gender and leadership, which has produced several decades of empirical findings (Chin & Sanchez-Hucles, 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2007), there is almost nothing in the scholarly literature specifically regarding LGBT leadership issues, particularly in regard to working adults. However, we believe that concepts and findings from other bodies of literature can contribute to an understanding of the challenges and opportunities that LGBT leaders and their followers may face. We have incorporated these notions into a proposed model of LGBT leadership enactment, offered in the hope that it will function heuristically to stimulate research interest and empirical attention.

In this limited space, our intention is to bring together, illustratively rather than comprehensively, small fragments of literature that we believe offer promise in exploring LGBT leadership issues. Just as intersectionality characterizes multiple identity statuses more fully than simple summative descriptions of marginalization (Pastrana, 2006), our model is presented multidimensionally to suggest that these literatures intersect in complex ways (and the considerable overlap in the discussion that follows obviates the ways in which complexities of intersectionality extend far beyond our capacity to capture it in a model). We also note that our model (and discussion) is affirmative in that it does not create a problem of LGBT identity *per se*. Rather, the model attempts to capture the ways in which stigma and marginalization may affect LGBT leaders and their followers, both positively and negatively, in complex intersections.

## **Affirmative Model of LGBT Leadership Enactment**

Our proposed model contains three intersecting dimensions relevant to sexual minority identity status as enacted in a leadership role: (a) sexual orientation, particularly in regard to identity disclosure; (b) gender orientation, including leader gender; and (c) the situation, conceptualized here as group composition. Leadership always is enacted within a context, the most relevant factors here being stigma and marginalization (see Figure 1). Because stigmatization is so formative in the life experiences of sexual minorities, we begin our presentation of the model with a rather extensive discussion of stigmatization and marginalization of LGBT people.

**Figure 1**  
Affirmative Model of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Leadership Enactment



### Context of LGBT Leadership: Stigma and Marginalization

Social psychology boasts a long tradition of studying interpersonal processes that we believe are highly relevant to LGBT leadership. The widespread social stigmatization of LGBT people is perhaps the most important phenomenon on which extant work in psychology can shed light, and Herek's extensive work in sexual stigma (Herek, 2007, 2008; Herek, Gillis, & Cogan, 2009) provides an excellent framework for understanding the context of our model. Herek's sexual stigma framework addresses the denigration, disrespect, and disempowering of sexual minority individuals and groups. His framework includes both cultural and individual manifestations of stigma and articulates effects on the nonstigmatized majority as well as on the targets of stigma.

*Cultural or societal stigma* (Herek, 2007, 2008; Herek et al., 2009) is systemic and structural, and it captures the ways in which heterosexist assumptions are deeply and nonconsciously embedded in societal institutions such as law, religion, health, and the workplace. Societal stigma functions to perpetuate views of heterosexuality as normal, natural, and superior, and renders LGBT people either invisible or sick/immoral/evil. Particularly relevant to this discussion is discrimination against sexual minority people in the workplace, which is well documented, encoded in existing laws, and even socially sanctioned in some arenas, such as the military (see Fassinger, 2008b; King & Cortina, in press).

*Individual stigma* (Herek, 2007, 2008; Herek et al., 2009) is personal and psychological, and manifests in three

distinct ways—as enacted, felt, and internalized stigma. *Enacted stigma* consists of individual behaviors that perpetrate stigma and can range from exclusion to violence. Hate crimes based on (perceived) sexual orientation are the most egregious examples of enacted stigma, but research on the elicitation of prejudice demonstrates that even relatively benign derogatory remarks can have a negative impact, both on the target of the remarks and on bystander attitudes. For example, one study highly relevant to our discussion was an experimental investigation of the effects of derogatory remarks on perceptions of leadership performance of a gay male leader (Goodman, Schell, Alexander, & Eidelman, 2008). Findings demonstrated that male and female college students working with an obviously gay leader evaluated that leader's abilities less favorably and demonstrated more negative nonverbal behavior toward him when they were cued by a derogatory remark than students who worked with gay leaders but did not hear a derogatory remark (or those who worked with a presumed heterosexual leader). It is notable that this phenomenon occurred under experimental conditions that guaranteed exemplary leadership and in which the actual derogatory remark was extremely mild ("He's so gay"). Moreover, the fact that negative reactions occurred only in the derogatory remark condition supports a larger literature suggesting the importance of social contextual cues in permitting the expression of prejudice. The authors concluded that even mildly derogatory remarks against members of socially stigmatized groups foster discrimination and hostile social environments that "can open the door to devaluation and disparagement" of other group members who are not directly targeted (Goodman et al., 2008, p. 552).

Goodman et al. (2008) suggested a connection between enacted stigma directed at one individual and impact on the workplace climate more broadly. This linkage characterizes *felt stigma* (Herek, 2007, 2008; Herek et al., 2009), the individual's awareness of stigma and its consequences regardless of whether she or he has been targeted directly by enacted stigma. The concept of "minority stress," applied in the LGBT literature through Meyer's work (Meyer, 1995, 2003; Meyer & Wilson, 2009), explains responses to felt stigma—the constant fear and preemptive, self-protective coping strategies and harm avoidance (including identity concealment) in which members of stigmatized groups engage on the basis of their omnipresent awareness of their stigmatization. It should be fairly obvious why felt stigma renders the coming out process (both to self and others) such an important identity milestone in LGBT lives and why sexual minority individuals who are out generally exhibit better mental health than their closeted counterparts (Herek & Garnets, 2007). *Stereotype threat* (Steele, 1997), describing how and why performance is impaired when negative stereotypes about one's own stigmatized group are evoked, also is a product of felt stigma. As Goodman et al. (2008) suggested, derogation of an LGBT worker by just one individual can lead to a hostile workplace climate, and in such contexts, stereotype threat and other responses to felt stigma are likely to proliferate.

*Internalized stigma* (Herek, 2007, 2008; Herek et al., 2009) refers to acceptance of the legitimacy of stigma and the incorporation of stigma into one's self-concept. For the target group, this results in *self-stigma*—the self-hatred, identity denial, and identity concealment that characterize many sexual minority individuals at some point in their lives, with deleterious effects on psychological health (e.g., Herek & Garnets, 2007). For the sexual majority, internalized stigma is expressed as *sexual prejudice*, and the largely unconscious nature of pervasive, deeply held heterosexist assumptions virtually ensures that most, if not all, people raised in a sexually stigmatizing culture will hold and express sexual prejudice at one time or another. Moreover, studies point to the negative effects of even the most benign forms of expressed unconscious prejudice. Smith and Ingram (2004), for example, surveyed LGB individuals and found that experiences of heterosexism and unsupportive social interactions regarding those experiences were related independently to negative psychological health outcomes; blaming responses in particular moderated the relationship between heterosexism and both depression and distress. The authors concluded that negative responses from social network members may constitute a more salient stressor than heterosexism itself.

If even seemingly mild forms of heterosexist prejudice have negative effects on LGBT people, it seems likely that they will feel stigmatized (or remain hypervigilant about the possibility of enacted stigma) much of the time. As the overall function of stigma is to maintain the disempowerment and relegation to the margins of society of the targeted group, the potential negative impact of marginalization on LGBT leaders very likely functions at all stages or levels of leadership development. That is, LGBT individuals may experience low self-efficacy in regard to assuming certain leadership roles; they may be prevented from emerging as leaders within certain occupational opportunity structures; they may find their effectiveness and success as leaders compromised when they become leaders; and they may be perceived as ineffective even if successful. A talented sexual minority soldier, for example, may hold back from exerting leadership out of fear of the public scrutiny that such leadership brings. Even if she ends up being a leader, her leadership roles likely will be compromised by her continual need to hide her identity. If her identity is disclosed, she will not only be stripped of her leadership position but will also lose her job altogether under current law; Colonel Margarethe Cammermeyer's experience with the Washington State National Guard speaks to this reality (Cammermeyer, 1994).

Despite the myriad ways that marginalization may compromise LGBT leadership, it is also the case that marginalization, as Brown (1989) pointed out, may increase the effectiveness of LGBT people in a variety of contexts, including leadership roles. Learning to cope with the stresses related to marginalization actually may catalyze certain kinds of skill development that aid LGBT individuals in leadership roles. Friend (1991), for example, suggested that "crisis competence" developed during the coming out process may position sexual minority individ-

uals to listen and respond better to criticism; articulate their own points of view even in the face of opposition; create strong support systems; advocate for themselves and similar others within systems of power and privilege; examine their own needs, desires, and life goals; and take care of themselves psychologically, physically, and materially. As Brown (1989) asserted, existing in two worlds may permit more expansive views of ways to resolve difficulties, and being free of dominant societal norms may allow one to more effectively tolerate and encourage the kind of divergent thinking required to solve the thorniest problems.

It is interesting that there is some empirical evidence for such speculations from multicultural research. A perusal of the literature about core personal identity characteristics and leadership development illuminates the commonalities of the experience of marginalization in a dominant group/organization/culture, as well as the themes of lessons learned from such experiences by those who have been marginalized. For example, Chin et al. (2007) reviewed the literature on women's leadership development and examined a variety of variables related to core personal identity (e.g., race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation). Although there were clear differences noted among women leaders of diverse backgrounds and groups, there were common themes in their leadership experiences regarding inclusion, the nature of communication, sharing of power, collaboration, and values-based problem solving. Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen (2003), in a meta-analysis of 45 studies, found that female leaders were more transformational in approach than male leaders, and similar results have been found in regard to other marginalized groups (Chin et al., 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2003a, 2003b; Yoder, 2001).

That there would be leadership similarity across dimensions of identity marginalization (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender) perhaps is not surprising given that such groups share subordinate locations in power relations with dominant groups. Indeed, Pastrana (2006) noted that standpoint theory (Harding, 1993, 1998) posits the likelihood for stigmatized groups to express identifiable positions, or standpoints, which include critical analyses of power. It would seem that views of power relations are highly relevant to the ways in which leaders in marginalized groups think about and enact leadership. Thus, the study of the marginalization experience and its effects—both negative and positive—on the leadership of LGBT individuals may prove to be an extremely important and viable area of leadership study.

A final point about marginalization experiences related to sexual stigma is that they are compounded by additional minority statuses that an individual may hold in terms of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, disability, and the like. Bieschke, Hardy, Fassinger, and Croteau (2008) have suggested that such marginalization experiences do not merely function additively but, rather, intersect in complex ways for individuals and groups. Vasquez and Comas-Diaz (2007) described multiply marginalized identities in groups as positioning one on the "outer edge of the inner circle," referring to a secondary



marginalization process in which a stigmatized group is regulated internally by more privileged members of that group (Pastrana, 2006). LGBT people of color, for example, must manage the intersectionality of their multiple subordinate statuses in groups, whether they are leaders or followers. It is not unreasonable to expect that complex interpersonal dynamics will occur in response to layers of marginalization in diverse groups of people, and leadership processes, of course, constitute a part of that complexity. Thus, the focus of our model on sexual orientation should not be construed as a dismissal of other important aspects of identity.

### **Dimension 1 of the LGBT Leadership Model: Sexual Orientation**

We begin this section by noting that a discussion of the profound complexity of sexual orientation is well beyond the scope of this article (but see Fassinger & Arseneau, 2007; Moradi, Mohr, Worthington, & Fassinger, 2009). For the purpose of explicating our model, we simply intend to capture the experience of enacting LGBT leadership along several obvious and pertinent dimensions, LGBT identification (whether that identification is known and disclosed or not) being the most salient. As we have noted, very little published research exists regarding sexual orientation and leadership, but we share here the small quantity of scholarly and lay writings that address issues related to LGBT leadership.

#### ***LGBT leadership: A nascent literature.***

The central argument underlying this article is that LGBT leadership represents a distinctive leadership experience worthy of empirical attention. One area of research that is beginning to explore LGBT leadership issues directly is the literature in college student development, particularly the work of Renn and her colleagues (Renn, 2007; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005a, 2005b). This line of qualitative research has been concerned with the intersection of college student LGBT identity and leadership, particularly the impact on LGBT college students of leading LGBT organizations and how students make meaning of their leadership and identity development experiences.

Renn (2007) found that students expressed different ways of being leaders based on their personal identity development trajectories and that the foci of their leadership roles (e.g., social, political, educational) depended on the kind of leadership they espoused. More specifically, “positional” leaders identified as LGBT and primarily were oriented toward working within existing systems to secure basic rights and equitable treatment (acceptance, inclusion) for sexual minority people. In contrast, “transformational” leaders tended to identify as queer and were more likely to question existing systems and want to work toward more radical goals (identity affirmation, social change). These findings are particularly interesting in terms of understanding possible cohort effects in LGBT leadership. Many contemporary college students, who will be future sexual minority leaders, are coming out under far more affirmative conditions than the generation of LGBT leaders that preceded them. More educated about the pervasive and insid-

ious effects of cultural and structural heterosexism, they may hold different standpoints relative to issues of power and marginalization than their predecessors. Thus, they may be less likely to settle for equitable participation in existing institutions and more likely to demand deeper change, the cornerstones for enacting transformational and other modern leadership approaches. Renn (2007) also found that engagement in identity-based student organizations led students into leadership roles, and Renn and Bilodeau (2005a, 2005b) found that LGBT identity development and leadership development in their samples of college students reinforced one another—the more LGBT students led LGBT organizations, the more out they had to be, and the more out they were, the more reasons they found to be in leadership positions.

A large-scale quantitative study of college students may provide additional perspective about qualities that sexual minority leaders bring to their roles. The Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (Komives, Dugan, & Segar, 2006; Martinez, Ostick, Komives, & Dugan, 2006), a 52-campus study of the influence of higher education on college student leadership development, has involved approximately 50,000 students, 1,600 of whom self-identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. No differences in leadership self-efficacy between heterosexual and LGB students were found in the study (Martinez et al., 2006). However, statistically significant differences were found between LGB students and heterosexual students in several aspects of socially responsible leadership, with LGB students scoring higher than heterosexual students on managing controversy with civility, recognizing the interconnectedness of members of a community, and believing that change is possible and can be achieved when people work together. It is interesting that LGB students reported less honesty and authenticity with others, less sharing of responsibility with others, and less commitment to group goals. Martinez and colleagues (2006) attributed these differences to student identity development trajectories, organizational homophobia, and students’ positions as outsiders within their groups.

Porter (1998) studied leadership self-efficacy in college students across 13 campuses and found that progression in lesbian or gay identity did not affect leadership self-efficacy for leading a same-type (lesbian or gay) or different-type (heterosexual) organization; however, identity did significantly influence self-esteem, which, in turn, affected self-efficacy. Porter also found gender differences, in that gay men reported lower self-esteem and were more influenced by organizational climate than were lesbians, and they also had less confidence in their ability to enact idealized influence (e.g., acting as a role model for others) in a heterosexual than in a lesbian or gay group. Finally, a study of heterosexist attitudes of a particular kind of college student leader—resident assistants—demonstrated that even student leaders exposed to diversity training harbor levels of intolerance toward LGBT students similar to those of their nonleader peers (Horne, Rice, & Israel, 2004).

Moving to studies of adult LGBT leaders, an excellent mixed-methods (surveys and interviews) dissertation study

by Coon (2001) of 50 openly gay men and lesbians in prominent positions across several career fields found that the majority of participants viewed their sexual minority identity as having a positive or very positive impact on their professional lives. Despite the fact that most saw limits in their capacity to advance as out lesbian and gay leaders, they also described a variety of leadership practices that they believed to be effective and were grounded in their sexual minority identities. These practices included challenging the status quo of the organizational culture, fostering collaboration and inclusion, empowering others (especially those on the margins of the organization), inspiring shared vision, modeling honesty and integrity for followers, being willing to be flexible and take risks, and being willing to listen and learn. We note that a number of these qualities are entirely consistent with characteristics (e.g., adaptability, tolerance for ambiguity, emotional intelligence, cognitive complexity) thought to be particularly important in newer models of leaders as learners in contemporary workplaces (White et al., 1996; Zaccaro, 2007).

Similar findings were noted by Snyder (2006) in one of the few published studies of adult LGBT leadership that we were able to locate (although this study is marred by methodological flaws, we include it here for the provocative questions that it raises in an area of scant research). Snyder's survey and interview data, involving more than 3,000 working professionals and 150 out gay male leaders across a variety of professional fields, suggested positive relationships between the leadership behaviors of gay male executives and higher levels of engagement, job satisfaction, and workplace morale among employees. In explaining his findings, Snyder claimed that gay male executives excel in three skills fundamental to strong leadership: adaptability, creative problem solving, and intuitive communication. According to Snyder, gay executives build environments that embrace change, are comfortable in risk taking, and believe in the usefulness of nonconformity. They become creative problem solvers because of their experience of having to create their own life paths in a heterosexist society (note the similarity to Brown's, 1989, concept of normative creativity). Finally, Snyder suggested that gay men develop communication skills in coming out (sharing personal and potentially difficult information with others, constantly scanning the environment for the emotional reactions of others, and negotiating trust and authenticity) that render them intuitive leaders who are sensitive to the needs of their employees.

Despite the flaws in Snyder's (2006) study, his findings may exhibit some veracity, as they are consistent with Coon's (2001) well-designed study, as well as with credible studies by Shallenberger (1994) and Woods and Lucas (1993), who reported similar results almost two decades ago. The majority of the sample in Shallenberger's study, for example, viewed themselves as more valuable to the organization because of their gay identities, citing such characteristics as tolerance of ambiguity, sensitivity to diverse employees, understanding of oppression, inner strength, creativity and ability to come at issues from a different angle, courage and willingness to take risks, col-

laborative approach, and humility. Moreover, lay reports suggest some support for the findings of these empirical studies regarding self-perceived strengths of sexual minority leaders. In his discussions of being an openly gay college president, for example, Hexter (2007a) suggested that being gay is related to his success at Hampshire College in Massachusetts. In particular, he cited "habits of mind" that he developed as an out gay man that helped him nurture a welcoming and affirming culture and that modeled for students a kind of authenticity.

Eagly's (2007) work on women's leadership offers an alternative explanation. Eagly suggested that one reason women may appear to be more effective leaders is that women who attain leadership roles must be more qualified and competent than their male counterparts to overcome the continuing barriers that they face in achieving such status. That is, women's leadership styles tend to approximate "good managerial practices" more than men's styles; however, women face more prejudice, so it is more difficult for them to be effective in leadership roles, thus ensuring that successful leaders really will stand out (Eagly & Carli, 2007). A similar question might be asked about whether LGBT persons who attain leadership roles simply are exceptionally qualified and competent to have achieved such status despite deeply entrenched social stigma. It is interesting that, in support of this possibility, participants in Coon's (2001), Shallenberger's (1994), and Snyder's (2006) studies of gay and lesbian leadership all discussed achieving and demonstrating high competence as a defense against discrimination.

Overall, this work suggests the premise that sexual minority people may bring different sensibilities, values, skills, and experiences to the task of leadership. However, missing from these studies is explicit attention to the issue of self-disclosure of sexual orientation. The assumption tends to be that LGBT leaders are known to be members of sexual minorities (both to themselves and others) and that their identities thus exert influence in conscious ways. This may be due to the often-noted tendency in LGBT research to oversample participants who are open about their identities (Moradi et al., 2009). However, sexual orientation is both a developmental process and a concealable stigma, which means that many LGBT individuals may fail to recognize or may hide their identities, particularly in the workplace. Thus, self-disclosure cannot be assumed, and when it occurs, it creates a distinct event in leadership that merits attention.

**Self-disclosure and leadership.** Blustein (2008) noted that the workplace, as the location of the intersection of individuals with society, also is the nexus of societal oppression and discrimination against stigmatized groups. Thus, existing research about LGBT individuals in the workplace may contribute relevant perspectives to issues of leadership. The literature related to LGBT issues in education and work is growing (see Croteau, Bieschke, Fassinger, & Manning, 2008; Fassinger, 2008b), and, because of pervasive heterosexist discrimination, much of this literature is focused on issues of workplace climate and identity management and disclosure.



Ragins and Cornwell's (2001) often-cited study of sexual minority identity in the workplace indicated that lesbian and gay employees experienced various forms of discrimination and were less likely to disclose sexual orientation in workplaces in which they had observed or experienced discrimination related to sexual orientation. Less positive workplace climates (e.g., those without gay-supportive policies) were associated with more negative work attitudes (e.g., turnover intentions, poorer organizational commitment), fewer promotions, and lower compensation. These kinds of findings, linking workplace discrimination versus support to identity disclosure, attitudinal outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment), psychological impact (e.g., interpersonal relationships, psychological symptoms), and tangible effects (e.g., absenteeism, salary, turnover), have been replicated across a considerable number of studies (Brenner, Lyons, & Fassinger, in press; Button, 2001; Croteau et al., 2008; Day & Schoenrade, 1997, 2000; Driscoll, Kelley, & Fassinger, 1996; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Lyons, Brenner, & Fassinger, 2005; Ragins, 2004, 2008; Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007; Rostovsky & Riggle, 2002; Waldo, 1999).

For LGBT people, their own perceptions of themselves as leaders, as well as the judgments of others regarding their leadership, may focus on whether others in the group or organization perceive or know that the leader is a member of a sexual minority. Unlike women and people of color, whose identification usually is obvious, LGBT people often retain some (both initial and ongoing) decision about whether their sexual orientation identity is part of what is known about them in their workplaces. That is, for continuously visible minorities, there is no choice about what others might see to judge the leader's relationship to default expectations about what leaders should be. For less visible minorities, such as LGBT persons, the conscious decision to include sexual orientation identity as part of their visible public persona is a complicated issue. "In choosing to be open, gay men (and lesbian women) voluntarily change their status from discreditable to discredited" (Shallenberger, 1994, p. 120), making the ongoing management and control of information about identity a core aspect of professional life for LGBT individuals.

As there is ample evidence that being publicly gay or lesbian is still a matter of safety on many fronts, the very issue of visibility may in and of itself affect the willingness of LGBT persons to pursue leadership roles (Baker & Greene, 2007). The visibility of a leadership role creates heightened experiences of vulnerability for those LGBT persons who are not out, as they must constantly consider the possibility that information about their sexual orientation will be pondered, discussed, disclosed, and/or distributed without their knowledge or permission. Moreover, reluctance or unwillingness to disclose identity does not necessarily protect an individual from scrutiny or negative attitudes from others. Experimental research (Oswald, 2007) has demonstrated that sexual minority targets who conceal their identity are perceived more negatively than those who are open about their sexual orientation. Concealing identity also has been linked to reduced task efficacy

(Barreto, Ellemers, & Banal, 2006), and identity avoidance strategies have been associated negatively with work group functioning (Chrobot-Mason, Button, & DiClementi, 2001). Thus, decisions to disclose sexual orientation by LGBT leaders likely are complicated both by their own internalized stigma as well as by others' judgments about the way that they handle their identity.

Despite the stigmatizing of their sexual minority identities and the potential for discrimination, LGBT individuals increasingly are open about their sexual and/or gender orientation (Chin & Sanchez-Hucles, 2007; Croteau et al., 2008), and there is evidence to suggest that disclosing one's LGBT identity in the workplace is associated with positive outcomes (Croteau et al., 2008; Fassinger, 2008b). Higher education, perhaps because of its (presumably) more liberal atmosphere than other workplace contexts, may be especially amenable to sexual minority leaders. After being featured in print as a gay executive (Snyder, 2006), Ralph J. Hexter, president of Hampshire College, published an essay titled "Being an 'Out' President," first in *Inside Higher Ed.com* (Hexter, 2007a) and later in the *Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide* (Hexter, 2007b). Subsequently, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reported that there were at least three openly gay university presidents (Fain, 2007b). That article prompted a number of college presidents to contact the *Chronicle* to inquire about their exclusion. One month later, a brief update indicated that the *Chronicle's* list of openly gay and lesbian presidents of American colleges and universities had grown to 11 (Fain, 2007c).

However, during that same year, news of the suicide of Denise Denton, Chancellor of the University of California Santa Cruz, also made headlines (Fain, 2007a). Dr. Denton had built a career on being a pioneer—the first female dean of an engineering school at a major research university, the first openly lesbian chancellor in the University of California system, and, sadly, the first out lesbian university CEO to commit suicide. In the wake of her death, reports surfaced that she and her partner had been victims of antigay attacks (Fain, 2007a) and other forms of treatment not experienced by most heterosexuals (Watson & Algert, 2007). Although there were other factors contributing to Denton's suicide, it is widely acknowledged that homophobia played a significant role in the unfolding of this tragedy (Watson & Algert, 2007). Denton's experience serves as a cautionary tale in stark counterpoint to the almost giddy public disclosure of other college presidents, and it is a poignant warning against complacency about the presumed safety of LGBT leaders in higher education or any other work environment. Moreover, the experience of Denise Denton also was likely due to gender discrimination intersecting with heterosexism, a conflation that presents considerable difficulties for many LGBT individuals and is captured in the second dimension of our model.

### **Dimension 2 of the LGBT Leadership Model: Gender Orientation**

Consistent with a more general model of identity enactment of gender-transgressive sexual minorities (Fassinger &

Arseneau, 2007), our model of leadership enactment also includes a gender orientation dimension. Gender orientation includes not only biological/physiological/assigned gender, but also gender roles, attitudes, cognitions, behavior, and presentation—in short, the way in which each individual's gender is expressed (Fassinger & Arseneau, 2007). Because of the well-documented societal confounding of gender and sexual orientation (i.e., the predominant belief that wanting same-sex partners indicates a desire to be the other sex, or that gender nonconformity is proof of homosexuality), beliefs and attitudes about sexual orientation are profoundly gendered. Thus, gender, perhaps more than any other minority status, is inextricably linked to issues of LGBT leadership. Moreover, there is a substantial literature relevant to gender and the leadership context (Chin et al., 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2007) that can contribute to understanding the leadership of LGBT people, who are, by their minority status, gender transgressors (Fassinger & Arseneau, 2007).

Yoder (2001) demonstrated through a series of empirical studies that leadership occurs in a context which itself is gendered. She found that contextual variables such as group composition, task characteristics, shifting standards related to goals, and power emphases were related to the gendered context of the leadership situation. Both women and men were considered to be more effective when they functioned as leaders in situations thought to be most "congenial" to cultural expectations for their gender—that is, when the gender traditionality of the tasks was most congruent with (apparent) leader gender. Yoder's studies demonstrated that perceptions of a leader are inextricably tied to the default concept of being male—that is, men are experienced by others (both women and men) as *leaders*, and women are experienced by others as *women leaders*. Moreover, due to well-documented effects of gender stereotypes and gender role socialization on leadership (e.g., Eagly & Carli, 2007), gender circumscribes the range of permissible behaviors. Female leaders cannot do what male leaders do and obtain the same results, and instead find that their success requires navigating a narrow band of behaviors not considered too masculine to render them credible women or too feminine to render them credible leaders. Moreover, these stereotypes persist; one recent study (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008) indicated that participants conferred lower status on an angry professional woman than on an angry professional man and that they attributed the woman's emotions to internal characteristics (whereas attributions about men's anger were external).

Pratto, Korchmaros, and Hegarty (2007) described the process through which people designate by race and gender those people who might be perceived as occupying atypical roles. It would seem plausible that this notion might be extended to assert that leadership in dominant Western culture is inextricably tied to the default concept of being male and White, and perhaps accompanied by another prevailing default assumption of heterosexual orientation. Thus, for men, this could mean that a man can be a *leader*, whereas a gay man can be a *gay leader*. For out gay male leaders, a default concept for man as leader exists, so

attention is likely to focus more immediately and directly on the gay leader's sexual orientation, especially his perceived masculinity. Given the predominant conflation of gender and sexual orientation, a gay male leader's behaviors and decisions probably will be scrutinized closely to determine whether he is a "real man"—strong, decisive, and assertive in his leadership enactment. That is, in role congeniality terms (Yoder, 2001), an out gay male leader may be perceived as effective only to the extent that he does not transgress gender norms too obviously or "flaunt" his homosexuality. Moreover, he may try to compensate for the fundamental gender transgression of his sexual minority identity by overfunctioning and overachieving—perhaps even enacting a hypermasculine leadership style—to ensure that his competence is unquestioned.

For out lesbian leaders, default assumptions regarding both leader gender and sexual orientation likely come into play immediately—if *leaders* are male, she is not only a *woman leader* but a *lesbian woman leader*. The fundamental questions are the following: Are you a "real" woman? A "real" leader? There is an obvious and ironic double bind in her situation. As a lesbian, she cannot be viewed as a "real" woman, but as a woman, she cannot be viewed as a "real" leader. And if she further confounds her predicament by clear transgressions of gender role behavior (i.e., acting too masculine), it is reasonable to expect that her role congeniality will be further threatened and her perceived (and even actual) leadership effectiveness compromised. There is research support for the idea that the degree of gender role transgression affects attitudes toward a sexual minority leader. Lehavot and Lambert's (2007) experimental study participants rated the morality of heterosexual or homosexual targets behaving in masculine and feminine ways. The researchers found that ratings were most negative when sexual minority targets behaved in ways that confirmed sexual identity stereotypes (i.e., when gay men acted feminine and lesbians behaved in masculine ways). These results suggest that transgression of gender roles by LGBT leaders places them at greater risk of negative perceptions by followers and observers than does behaving in ways considered more appropriate for their (perceived) gender.

It also is worth noting that the presence of a visible partner further complicates the perception of gender appropriateness of sexual minority leaders. On the one hand, a partner is a constant reminder of the fundamental gender transgression of the LGBT leader and therefore might be expected to produce negative attitudes. Again, the Denise Denton story is instructive in this regard, as much of the hostility directed against Denton was related to the perceived inappropriateness of her partner's highly paid position. However, Denton's partner also was blamed in part for her death because of relationship difficulties of the couple. This situation points to the other aspect of potential partner impact on LGBT leadership—that a loving partner can be viewed as a stabilizing influence and thus counter the hypersexual stereotypes of LGBT people. Such views presumably would promote more positive attitudes toward the leader. Thus, partners may have mixed effects on perceptions of gender appropriateness of LGBT leaders.

When LGBT leaders are closeted, gender orientation issues become even more complicated. For a gay male leader who is mostly or fully closeted, he may be viewed simply as a (male) leader—that is, the default image of leadership—with all of the power and privilege accorded to that position. This probably will remain unquestioned to the extent that he is clearly masculine in his self-presentation. Similarly, if a closeted lesbian woman (particularly one who presents in a stereotypically feminine fashion) is in a leadership position, she is likely to be subject to all of the leadership challenges typical to women (Chin et al., 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2007). If these leaders deviate from a stereotypical gender role presentation, however, then complicated dynamics related to gender transgression are likely to influence the leadership process, as the conflation of gender and sexual orientation may bring suspicion that they are sexual minorities based on deviance from proscribed gender roles. That is, a woman presenting in a masculine manner may be suspected to be lesbian, and a man who presents in a feminine way may be presumed to be gay. If such assumptions are made, then issues of discredited status, role noncongeniality, and hidden identity inevitably follow. When follower expectations and needs—independent of any given leader—are factored into the process, complexities of leadership enactment expand exponentially. These are captured in the third dimension of our model.

### ***Dimension 3 of the LGBT Leadership Model: Situation***

As we noted earlier, the evolution of leadership theory to recognize the importance of followers constituted a major shift in the way that leadership was conceptualized and studied as well as fostered and promoted through leadership training and coaching. This attention to followers is critically important to understanding the challenges that LGBT leaders may face. A focus on the leader is, by definition, a very individualistic conceptualization of what happens in groups of people. However, contemporary discourses focus more on leadership processes than on leaders per se, with the understanding that various aspects of the leader's role may be embedded in a variety of individuals, processes, and systems within a group or organization. Central to such notions of leadership is a strong emphasis on the continuing interactive reciprocity of formal leaders and followers. As we have been discussing, leaders bring with them worldviews based on previous experiences, especially those related to their personal core identities (such as sexual and gender orientation). Those worldviews have a major impact on the preferences and selection of behaviors that they tend to bring with them across situations (often designated as traits in the leadership literature; see Zaccaro, 2007). Then LGBT leaders are confronted by a particular configuration of persons, an organization, a work environment, or all of these, which, in turn, further affect the subset of leader behaviors that they choose to display.

The third dimension of our model highlights the fact that followers also do not come to situations with neutral experiences. They bring with them their own worldviews,

especially related to their personal core identities, based on their previous experiences as well. When leaders and followers come together, therefore, they bring themselves and their prior experiences, their predispositions to perceive idiosyncratic key variables in the current context, their perceptions of the current context itself, and specific technologies and knowledge relevant to the situation at hand. To ignore the key components of a leader's worldview or a follower's worldview, or to ignore their perceptions of the context based on deeply held views of personal characteristics and identities by both leader and follower alike, would be to ignore what actually happens when individuals and groups endeavor to make things happen. And, while simply put but often overlooked, this implies clearly that, in any given situation, no two leaders and followers may be having the same experience, even if obvious organizational or group variables appear constant. Research indicates clearly that the situation represents a source of significant variance in the leadership experience, although less is known about the specific ways in which follower characteristics moderate the effects of leadership on work outcomes (Zaccaro, 2007).

It is conceivable that for LGBT persons (and likely for marginalized people in general), those relatively few who ascend to positions of leadership are viewed differently in varying contexts, and the composition of the group (predominantly other sexual minorities, or primarily heterosexual, or mixed) is likely to exert considerable influence in shaping leader behaviors and the outcomes of the leadership process. For example, as Renn's (2007) work on college students suggests, many LGBT leaders have early leadership experiences in LGBT advocacy groups or other social justice organizations (also noted by Baker & Greene, 2007). They probably become accustomed to organizational climates and values as well as to follower expectations and goals that are fairly similar to their own, at least in regard to sexual identity expression and other aspects of the marginalized characteristic functioning as the uniting factor in the organization—including the mutual acknowledgment of enacted, felt, and internalized stigma. Avolio (2007) noted that followers' willingness to follow a leader likely depends on perceptions of the leader as reflecting their identities and values. Moreover, there is an anticipatory and self-observational quality in the leader–follower interaction—that is, leaders think about what followers will do, followers think about what the leader will do, both think about what the other party thinks they will do, and both think about the way that their situation is perceived by others. In predominantly sexual minority organizations, it is likely that this complicated process is simplified somewhat for LGBT leaders, as some similarity in expectations may be assumed.

In heterosexual or mixed groups, expectations of a sexual minority leader may be influenced strongly by conscious or unconscious sexual prejudice on the part of followers. Well-documented correlates of sexual prejudice include being male, holding conservative religious beliefs, having dogmatic or authoritarian attitudes, believing that LGBT people choose their sexual orientation, and lacking



contact with LGBT people. Moreover, increasing public acceptance of LGBT civil liberties (e.g., agreement that LGBT people should not be subjected to discrimination in the workplace) contrasts with relatively intractable societal intolerance of intimate same-sex behavior (e.g., belief that same-sex couples should not be allowed to marry or raise children). Finally, because sexual orientation is a concealable stigma (i.e., sexual orientation cannot be ascertained reliably by appearance), anyone could be LGBT, and the threat of stigma motivates some individuals to assert and exaggerate their heterosexuality, particularly in public places (e.g., Herek, 2007, 2008). For LGBT leaders to take on the challenge of leading groups whose followers are especially likely to harbor these kinds of negative attitudes (e.g., conservative religious or political groups, military and paramilitary organizations) is an act of considerable courage.

In heterosexual or mixed groups, expectations of followers regarding the leader also are likely to vary as the group's vision, values, and focus emphasize or de-emphasize the importance of the marginalized characteristic (i.e., sexual orientation). For example, the salience of a leader's demonstrated LGBT identity could be viewed very differently for a leadership role in a business concern with no discernible linkage to an LGBT community or issue than in a social advocacy organization. In the former, a sexual minority leader's public emphasis on her or his personal identity in a context in which followers consider it to be irrelevant is likely to catalyze hostile follower perceptions of, and behavior toward, the leader. By contrast, a social advocacy organization, even if not LGBT focused, may exhibit strong valuing of member diversity, and a leader might be expected to model identity empowerment for all members of the organization through her or his own public identity disclosure. Moreover, there might be a strong expectation in such an organization for the leader to implement a power-sharing leadership style (Baker & Greene, 2007; Hackman & Wageman, 2007), emphasizing follower participation and initiative.

In essence, a principle of sexual orientation "congeniality" could be operating for LGBT persons in leadership roles, with group composition a major component of how congenial a leadership role is judged to be for the LGBT leader. Research supports this conjecture, as it suggests that LGBT people behave and perceive differently in groups that are similar (i.e., predominantly sexual minorities) than in groups that are different. For example, in Ragins and Cornwell's (2001) study, lesbian and gay participants (not surprisingly) reported more discrimination in predominantly heterosexual workplaces; however, being in a gay work group did not affect their work attitudes directly but rather through workplace discrimination. Renn's (2007) LGBT college student leader samples experienced growth in both sexual identity and leadership in predominantly sexual minority organizations. Porter's (1998) male college students exhibited less confidence in their ability to lead through idealized influence in predominantly heterosexual groups, perhaps because they perceived that prejudice compromised their ability to be role models. Thus, it can be

assumed that there is a strong Leader  $\times$  Situation interaction, in which the situation sets the bounds within which any given leader's styles and skills are catalyzed (see Zaccaro, 2007). Raeburn's (2004) analysis of the evolution of domestic partner benefits in Fortune 1000 businesses provides a striking example of how LGBT leadership is constrained and shaped by situational variables—that is, how social change movements (and the employee activists who lead them) occur within particular institutional opportunity frameworks that allow or discourage certain behaviors. In the case of domestic partner benefits, success was associated with organizational variables such as strong allies, access to decision makers, and a diversity-affirmative corporate culture (Raeburn, 2004).

## Summary

In summary, our model suggests that sexual orientation (particularly as captured in identity disclosure) interacts with gender orientation (including gender) and with the situation (especially group composition) to affect both the leader and the followers in a complex and dynamic process of leadership enactment. This process occurs within a context of stigma and marginalization that is relatively unique to sexual minorities, involving (a) a concealable stigma (with all the attendant complexities of perceived handling of that concealment); (b) beliefs about control over the stigmatizing characteristic; (c) oppression and discrimination that receive considerable social sanction and public approval; and (d) the fact that the stigmatized characteristic may not be known to the individual possessing it, due to the process of recognizing and accepting discredited status that occurs in the lives of most LGBT people. Such factors profoundly affect the already complex process of leadership. We suggest in our multidimensional model that variations in the experiences of LGBT leadership will arise from the salience or degree of influence of any of the dimensions at a given point in time. That is, LGBT identity could function as either a distal or proximal influence on leadership, depending on its interaction with other individual and situational parameters at play in the process. We have offered ideas about relevant bodies of research that might contribute to an understanding of LGBT leadership, as virtually every aspect of our model begs for empirical attention.

## Building a Scholarly Literature in LGBT Leadership

Having highlighted the potential significance of experiences related to personal identity variables for the inclination to respond as leader or follower in any given situation, we now look to certain areas of focus related to leadership and sexual orientation that we believe need to be included in any full exploration and discussion of leadership. Here we utilize, adapt, and expand Hackman and Wageman's (2007) general questions regarding future research in leadership to apply to the particular issues of LGBT leadership:

1. *Under what conditions does LGBT leadership matter?* That is, in what situations is LGBT leader identity important and why? What are the conditions that support or penalize leaders who self-identify as sexual minorities?
2. *How do LGBT leaders' personal attributes interact with situational properties to shape outcomes?* That is, how does marginalization affect LGBT leadership? Are outcomes related to how the LGBT leader handles her or his identity? How do followers respond to the LGBT identity of their leaders?
3. *Is good LGBT leadership a qualitatively different phenomenon from poor LGBT leadership?* That is, do they differ in terms of the ways in which LGBT identity is or is not a core part of the leader's self-consciousness or self-expression?
4. *How can leadership models be reformulated so that they better integrate leadership and followership?* That is, can LGBT leaders teach us anything about contemporary approaches to leadership effectiveness?
5. *How can LGBT leaders be helped to learn?* That is, how can leadership mentoring occur in a context of stigma and hidden identities?

LGBT issues are just beginning to emerge in scholarly leadership work. If leaders in contemporary society are indeed "managers of meaning" (Smircich & Morgan, 1982), it is critically important to understand how LGBT leaders make meaning of their own experiences and impart that meaning-making process to their followers in ways that perhaps change organizations in profound ways. We agree with Hackman and Wageman's (2007) assertion that a complete reformulation of leadership as a contextual, culture-bound, and relational process is needed. It is our hope that the model we propose here stimulates such reformulation and that considerations of unique elements of LGBT leadership will come to play a significant role in how psychologists conceptualize and evaluate leadership styles, approaches, and effectiveness for all people.

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